



NEWS

Don't Wait for Rain or Snow; Get to Know Manure Runoff Advisory System Now

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MADISON – Farmers who need to spread manure over winter should familiarize themselves with the Wisconsin Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast and follow it to reduce the risk of runoff into lakes, streams and wells, state agriculture and natural resource officials say.

"We've switched over to winter mode now that snow is flying and the ground is freezing," says Sara Walling, water quality section leader with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "Instead of the three-day outlook shown in the warm weather months, the winter map gives you a 10-day outlook. It takes into consideration risk due to upcoming snowmelt or rainfall, and the fact that soils are frozen. It's a valuable tool for farmers."

The Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast is updated three times a day. It shows a map of all the National Weather Service basins in the state, and rates the risk of runoff by basin – not by individual field. Users can view the whole state, or zoom in on their particular basins. The web address is www.manureadvisorysystem.wi.gov.

In the winter, the site shows three levels of risk:

- Winter risk, where soils are frozen or snow-covered and manure must be applied with caution because it might not contact or infiltrate the soil
- High risk, where runoff may occur in the next 10 days, mostly due to rain
- High risk, where runoff may occur in the next 10 days, mainly because of snowmelt

"We recognize that not all farms have adequate storage capacity to avoid winter manure spreading," says Andrew Craig, nutrient management specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "During the winter months it is especially important for farmers to work closely with their crop consultants or county conservation officers to identify low-risk fields for manure spreading or find alternatives to manure spreading. The Runoff Risk Advisory System is a great resource to help reduce manure runoff risk in a particular basin and should be used in cooperation with professional advice."

The Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast is a joint effort of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, National Weather Service, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and U.S. Geological Survey.

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